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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/866,450	05/25/2001	Jonathan Bye	05222.00118	4118

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EXAMINER

HARBECK, TIMOTHY M

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3628

DATE MAILED: 03/29/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/866,450	Applicant(s) BYE, JONATHAN	
	Examiner Timothy M. Harbeck	Art Unit 3628	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 25 May 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-36 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-36 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 25 May 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ✓ 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ✓ 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 8/12/2002
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoffman (US 2001/0039529 A1).

Re Claim 1: Hoffman discloses a method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool, comprising:

- Transmitting, to one or more suppliers, a request for product cost information for a product to be delivered by the one or more suppliers (Paragraph 0004)
- Receiving product cost information from the one or more suppliers (Paragraph 0004)
- Electronically storing the product cost information from the one or more suppliers (paragraph 0022 "download the quote to an internal database.")

Hoffman does not explicitly disclose the steps comprising:

- Receiving a sales price for the product
- Using the received sales price and the product cost information, calculating a profit margin for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers; and

- Displaying the calculated profit margins for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers

However these steps would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention as they are notoriously old and well known in the business community. The purpose of soliciting quotes for a product is to be able to compare prices across a range of potential suppliers. The ultimate goal of almost any business, especially a retail business, is to maximize total profit by achieving a higher margin on goods sold (sale price minus purchase price). Clearly, Hoffman solicits the quotes from a number of suppliers for the purposes of comparison (paragraph 0004), and it would be obvious to any manager, owner of a business or person of ordinary skill to perform this comparison in light of the potential profit margin of each alternative.

Re Claim 2: Hoffman discloses the claimed method *supra* and further discloses wherein;

- The request for product cost information is transmitted to each of a plurality of suppliers (paragraph 0004)
- The product cost information is received from each of the plurality of suppliers (paragraph 004)

Hoffman does not explicitly disclose:

- The profit margin for sale of the product is calculated for each of the plurality of suppliers and;
- The displayed profit margins for sale of the product includes the profit margin calculated for each of the plurality of suppliers

However, in a similar argument to the previous rejection of claim 1, the step of calculating a profit margin based upon a number of different alternatives (in this case the cost of goods from individual suppliers), was notoriously well known in the art to anyone of ordinary skill at the time of invention. The purpose of soliciting quotes for a product is to be able to compare prices across a range of potential suppliers. The ultimate goal of almost any business, especially a retail business, is to maximize total profit by achieving a higher margin on goods sold (sale price minus purchase price). Clearly, Hoffman solicits the quotes from a number of suppliers for the purposes of comparison (paragraph 0004), and it would be obvious to any manager, owner of a business or person of ordinary skill to perform this comparison in light of the potential profit margin of each alternative.

Re Claim 3: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses wherein the request for product cost information is transmitted to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail and the product cost information is received from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail (Paragraph 0021).

Re Claim 4: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing the steps further including obtaining the product cost information from the one or more suppliers by

- Providing a cost sheet listing cost components of the product to the one or more suppliers and
- Receiving the cost sheet containing costs for the components from the one or more supplier

However it would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention to include separate components cost requests when sending the request for quotation form disclosed by Hoffman. If the product in question has multiple components, receiving a quote on each separate part would be advantageous in that it would further segment pricing information amongst the suppliers and allow the buyer to potentially achieve an even greater profit margin. For instance, if one supplier provides the lowest price for one component, while a separate supplier provides the lowest cost for a different component, the components could be ordered separately. This would result in a lower overall purchase cost for the buyer and, everything else being equal (sale price) would result in a higher gain.

Re Claim 5: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses the use of electronic mail for the dissemination and collection of pricing information between a buyer and suppliers (paragraph 0021-0022).

Re Claim 6: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses the step of defining the product to be provided by one or more suppliers (paragraph 0020; buyer has a need for a specific product).

Re Claims 7 and 8: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra but does not explicitly disclose graphically displaying the cost information from the one or more suppliers; Hoffman does disclose the step of comparing, via a database, the plurality of different quotes received from the suppliers (0022). Furthermore it would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention to graphically display the cost information to give the buyer a visual understanding of the different

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alternatives. It was notoriously well known in the art at the time of invention to graph financial figures for the purposes of comparison, especially utilizing the power of computer databases and spreadsheets in the process.

Re Claim 9: Hoffman discloses a method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool comprising:

- Defining a product to be provided by one or more suppliers (0021)
- Obtaining from one or more suppliers cost information for purchase of the product (0022)

Hoffman does not explicitly disclose

- A plurality of products
- Receiving a sale price for each of the products
- Determining a profit margin for sales of each of the products if supplied by the one or more suppliers and
- Simultaneously displaying for each of the products the determined profit margins

However, the step of defining a plurality of products would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention as simply a repetitive step in the Hoffman method. In other words, anyone of ordinary skill could use the Hoffman method to enter a request for quote for a plurality of products simply by replicating the initial process for each of the products. One would be motivated to do this if there is more than one product that the buyer wishes to order or if a complimentary items need to be ordered (matching shirts and ties for instance).

Furthermore, the other steps would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention as they are notoriously old and well known in the business community. The purpose of soliciting quotes for a product or products is to be able to compare prices across a range of potential suppliers. The ultimate goal of almost any business, especially a retail business, is to maximize total profit by achieving a higher margin on goods sold (sale price minus purchase price). Clearly, Hoffman solicits the quotes from a number of suppliers for the purposes of comparison (paragraph 0004), and it would be obvious to any manager, owner of a business or person of ordinary skill to perform this comparison in light of the potential profit margin of each alternative.

Re Claims 10: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses wherein

- The cost information for purchase of each product is obtained from each of the plurality of suppliers associated with the product (0004)

Hoffman again does not explicitly disclose the determination and display of profit margin for each product however, in a similar argument to claims 1, 2 and 9 above, this step would be obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention as it was a notoriously well known step in the business community.

Re Claim 11: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses wherein the request for product cost information for each product is transmitted to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail and the product cost

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information is received for each product from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail (Paragraph 0021).

Re Claim 12: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing the steps further including obtaining the product cost information from the one or more suppliers by

- Preparing a cost sheet for each product listing cost components of the product to the one or more suppliers and
- Providing the cost sheets to each of the plurality of suppliers to be completed with the cost information.

However it would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention to include separate components cost requests when sending the request for quotation form disclosed by Hoffman. If the products in question have multiple components, receiving a quote on each separate part would be advantageous in that it would further segment pricing information amongst the suppliers and allow the buyer to potentially achieve an even greater profit margin. For instance, if one supplier provides the lowest price for one component, while a separate supplier provides the lowest cost for a different component, the components could be ordered separately. This would result in a lower overall purchase cost for the buyer and, everything else being equal (sale price) would result in a higher gain.

Re Claim 13: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing wherein the cost sheet for one of the products includes different cost components than the cost sheet for another of the products, this would have been

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obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention because different products have different components and therefore different cost components. For instance a car would have different cost components (engine, tires, frame, ect) than would a computer (monitor, hard drive, CPU, printer ect).

Re Claim 14: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses the step including preparing the cost sheet in an electronic format and providing the cost sheet to the one or more suppliers by email (paragraph 0020-0022)

Re Claim 15: Hoffman discloses a method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool comprising

- Defining a product for purchase, the product being associated with one or more suppliers that may provide the product (0004)
- Obtaining cost information for purchase of the product from the one or more supplier associated with the product (0004)
- Electronically storing the cost information of the product obtained from the one or more suppliers associated with the product and (0022)
- Displaying the cost information of the product (0022)

Hoffman does not explicitly disclose wherein a plurality of products are defined, however, this would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention as simply a repetitive step in the Hoffman method. In other words, anyone of ordinary skill could use the Hoffman method to enter a request for quote for a plurality of products simply by replicating the initial process for each of the products. One would

be motivated to do this if there is more than one product that the buyer wishes to order or if a complimentary items need to be ordered (matching shirts and ties for instance).

Re Claim 16: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing graphically displaying the cost information for each product, Hoffman does disclose the step of comparing, via a database, the plurality of different quotes received from the suppliers (0022). Furthermore it would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention to graphically display the cost information to give the buyer a visual understanding of the different alternatives. It was notoriously well known in the art at the time of invention to graph financial figures for the purposes of comparison, especially utilizing the power of computer databases and spreadsheets in the process.

Re Claim 17: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses wherein

- The cost information for at least one product is obtained from each of the plurality of suppliers associated with the at least one product (0004)
- The simultaneously displayed cost information includes cost information for the at least one product and each supplier associated with the at least one product (0004)

Re Claim 18: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing wherein the cost information for the at least one product is graphically displayed; Hoffman does disclose the step of comparing, via a database, the plurality of different quotes received from the suppliers (0022). Furthermore it would

have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention to graphically display the cost information to give the buyer a visual understanding of the different alternatives. It was notoriously well known in the art at the time of invention to graph financial figures for the purposes of comparison, especially utilizing the power of computer databases and spreadsheets in the process.

Re Claim 19: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses requesting and receiving the cost information from the suppliers by email (0006 and 0022).

Re Claim 20: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing the steps further including obtaining the product cost information from the one or more suppliers by

- Preparing a cost sheet for each product listing cost components of the product to the one or more suppliers and
- Providing the cost sheets to each of the plurality of suppliers to be completed with the cost information.

However it would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention to include separate components cost requests when sending the request for quotation form disclosed by Hoffman. If the products in question have multiple components, receiving a quote on each separate part would be advantageous in that it would further segment pricing information amongst the suppliers and allow the buyer to potentially achieve an even greater profit margin. For instance, if one supplier provides the lowest price for one component, while a separate supplier provides the

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lowest cost for a different component, the components could be ordered separately.

This would result in a lower overall purchase cost for the buyer and, everything else being equal (sale price) would result in a higher gain.

Re Claim 21: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and while not explicitly disclosing wherein the cost sheet for one of the products includes different cost components than the cost sheet for another of the products, this would have been obvious to anyone skilled in the ordinary art at the time of invention because different products have different components and therefore different cost components. For instance a car would have different cost components (engine, tires, frame, ect) than would a computer (monitor, hard drive, CPU, printer ect).

Re Claim 22: Hoffman discloses the claimed method supra and further discloses the step including preparing the cost sheet in an electronic format and providing the cost sheet to the one or more suppliers by email (paragraph 0020-0022)

Re Claims 23-28: Further fact based negotiation tool (apparatus) claims would have been obvious to perform the steps recited in the previously rejected method claims 1-22 and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale.

Re Claims 29-36: Further computer readable medium claims would have been obvious in order to implement the previously rejected method claims 1-8, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- Spiegelhoff et al (US 5,742,931) discloses a system and method for allocating resources of a retailer among multiple wholesalers (note specifically the objects and summary of invention).
- Menninger et al (US 6,954,736) discloses a system, method and computer program product for order confirmation in a supply chain management framework (See abstract and Column 20 line 33-54)


Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Timothy M. Harbeck whose telephone number is 571-272-8123. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hyung S. Souh can be reached on 571-272-6799. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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